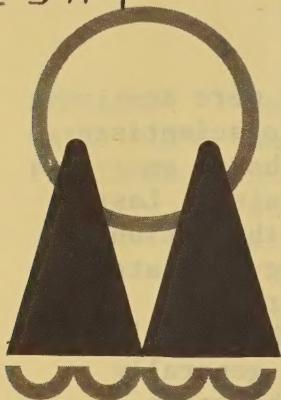


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RESPONSE

A Report on Actions for A Better Environment

NO. 6

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JULY 1971

RESPONSE is a periodic report from the United States Department of Agriculture on USDA's many areas of action to remedy environmental problems. Department programs protect and improve the environment through research, forestry, conservation and wide range of rural and community services.

**SITUATION
REPORT ON
INSECTS
THAT
ATTACK
FORESTS**

During the past year hundreds of millions of acres of forested lands in 27 States were surveyed from the air and on the ground to determine the extent of, and the damage wrought by, forest pest infestations. Findings of these surveys make up the 21st annual report titled "Forest Insect Conditions in the United States." Although compiled primarily for managers of public and private land to keep them abreast of insect conditions on their own and neighboring lands, the report also is useful to students and others interested in forest insects and their effect on the environment. Single copies are available free upon request to the editor.

**PLAINS
WIND
EROSION--
14-YEAR
HIGH**

Not since 1954-55 has the Great Plains suffered such severe wind erosion. So indicates the final wind erosion 10-State report of the season by Soil Conservation Service. Almost 5 million acres, mostly in the drought-plagued Southwest, underwent extensive damage. Months of extremely dry weather and unusually hard winter winds caused the damage. Single copies of the Great Plains Wind Erosion Conditions Report (1070-71 season) are available upon request to the editor.

**SAFE-USE
OF
PESTICIDES
SPREADS**

Late last month 14 more States signed an agreement with the federal government and industry to promote safe-use of pesticides. The program, now in effect in 36 States, is designed to assure safer use of highly toxic pesticides which are dangerous if improperly handled. Under the agreement, Agricultural Research Service and the participating States will determine precautions appropriate for each pesticide, introduce them into their own pesticide programs and begin instruction courses on safe-handling procedures.

CORN
BLIGHT
RESEARCH
FUNDED

One million dollars in grants for corn blight research were announced last month by USDA. The research money goes to scientists in 9 States to as many projects all of which place emphasis on environmentally acceptable controls of the blight organism. Last year the Southern Corn Leaf Blight (plus drought) cut the nation's expected corn crop about 15 percent. Many actions were initiated by growers and Federal, State and local agencies to curb the spread of the corn blight this year. As of mid-July this year's infection of Southern Corn Blight was characterized as generally light by authorities conducting an extensive corn blight-watch experiment in 7 Corn Belt States and to a lesser extent, throughout the nation. Locally severe occurrences of the disease were reported in Kansas, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio with at least evidence of the disease in 29 States.

U. S.
PRIVATE
LANDS NEED
CONSERVA-
TION

Of America's privately owned lands (outside urban areas) 63 percent need some kind of conservation treatment, especially pasture land (71 percent of it is in need of attention to stem erosion). This is but one of the situations noted in 200 pages of national and State summary tables on soil resources and their conservation needs. Titled "Basic Statistics -- National Inventory of Soil and Water Conservation Needs, 1967" (SB #461), the recently released report presents conservation needs statistics on crop, pasture, range, forest and other land. It covers essentially all nonfederal rural land in the U.S. as well as in Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. The information may be of interest to citizens and officials concerned with land use planning and resource conservation. Federal, State and local officials participated in compiling the data. Single copies are available upon request to the editor. SCS

URBAN
GARDEN
BOOKLETS

Gardens can do a lot to relieve the pressures of concrete, glass and steel on city dwellers who are lucky enough or determined enough to plant them. Two USDA publications can help the urban gardener: "Indoor Gardens with Controlled Lighting" (HGB-187) and "Growing Ornamentals in Urban Gardens" (HGB-188). Single copies available upon request to editor.

ENVIRON-
MENTAL
APPROACH
TO GARDEN
PESTS

"Insects and Diseases of Vegetables in the Home Garden," recently updated by ARS, suggests controls for more than 70 kinds of insect pests and 50 plant diseases. Beneficial insects that can help control pest species and crop varieties resistant to diseases are discussed as management practices that minimize the need for pesticides. Pesticides recommended are both safe to use and effective when properly applied. Single copies are available upon request to the editor.

FERTILIZER
USE UP 2
PERCENT

Use of commercial fertilizer in the United States in fiscal year 1970 (ending June 30, 1970) was up 2 percent over the previous year, according to the annual report "Commercial Fertilizers" released last month. Single copies detailing use by fertilizer and by State are available upon request to the editor.

NEBRASKA
WATER PLAN
PUBLISHED

Nebraska's Soil and Water Conservation Commission has published and presented to the Legislature the "Report on the Framework Study of Nebraska's State Water Plan," (NSWCC 101). The 270-page study is a principal part of the State water plan and is considered by the commission to be a major step forward in planning for the development, conservation, use, and protection of Nebraska's water and water-related resources. Single copies of the report are available free upon request to: James Owen, Assistant Executive Secretary, Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Commission, P. O. Box 94725, State House Station, Lincoln, Nebraska 68509.

NEW WHEAT-
GRASS FOR
ROCKIES

A versatile new erosion-combating wheatgrass was recently released for commercial seed production. Called Critana thickspike wheatgrass, it is adapted for the Rocky Mountain Region and is ideal for stabilization of construction sites and other disturbed areas as well as roadsides, airports and recreation areas. Its originators are the Soil Conservation Service Plant Materials Center in Bridger, Montana and the Montana State Agricultural Experiment Station at Bozeman.

GRASSHOPPER
PICTURE
STORY

The devastation grasshoppers do to crops and the environment in general is well documented both in recent and ancient history. Today the key to keeping this most destructive of insects under control is to spray budding infestations with nonpersistent insecticides such as malathion or carbaryl. A variety of natural enemies is used in control measures, too. A picture story on grasshopper control, 1971, of value to editors is available upon request to the editor. ARS

HEAVY
MANURE
RATES TO BE
STUDIED

The effect of animal manure on soil properties, nitrogen transformations, forage yields and quality will be studied by the Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University, Normal, under a recently announced agreement with USDA. ARS

SEARCH FOR
"CLEAN"
PESTICIDE

North Dakota Experiment Station cooperating with ARS is trying to develop a particularly nonpersistent insecticide with no objectionable residues to control sugarbeet root maggots. Almost \$80,000 is being made available for the 3-year study.

PESTICIDE
SAFETY
COURSE

Environmental Protection Agency staffers will conduct a 3-day comprehensive course in Safety and Pesticide Usage (Sept. 13-16) in Atlanta, Ga. Largely workshops and demonstrations, no charge is made for tuition or books, only for housing and subsistence. The course is specially designed for people who use or supervise the application of pesticides in their work. Get further information by writing to: EPA, Pesticides Programs, Div. of Pesticide Community Studies, 4770 Buford Highway, Chamblee, Ga. 30341. Phone, (404) 633-3311, ext. 5262.

OPEN PIT
MINING

The environmental impact of open pit mining in the Los Padres National Forest is the subject of a public hearing in Ventura, Calif., July 27-28. FS

- BEE/PESTICIDE LOSSES COVERED Bees and pesticides don't mix, that is, unless by accident, and this can mean serious financial losses to beekeepers. Now under the authority of Sec. 804 of the Agricultural Act of 1970, beekeepers (whose bees are killed by pesticides used near their bee colonies) can apply to USDA for an indemnity payment. Specifics on eligibility and the size of payments are in regulations and application forms to be available in county ASCS offices as of July 15. The program was made retroactive to Jan. 1, 1967 and is authorized through 1973.
- FEWER LESSER PEACH TREE BORERS? Results of a recent pilot experiment indicate that lesser peach tree borers may be controlled in cherry, peach, and plum orchards with fewer insecticide applications and in some instances, without pesticides entirely. The method -- traps using female moths to attract males. ARS and the University of Wisconsin are continuing the research toward commercial development of the traps.
- AN OLDIE BUT GOODIE Pyrethrins, among the safest insecticides known to man and considered non-hazardous to all animals other than insects, has been around for a long time. Since the First Century AD, in fact, when the Chinese used it to kill insects. Now it is gaining new prominence as scientists search for safer, less persistent, and more selective insecticides to replace DDT and other persistent pesticides. At present pyrethrins is primarily used for household insecticide products because of its rapid knock-down capacity. Only about 5 percent of it is used in agriculture, since, although it is powerful, it breaks down rapidly in sunlight. With the development recently by Forest Service chemists of a more stable formulation (which remains active for 48 hours after application) pyrethrins may have new value in control of forest pests. This summer pyrethrins is being tested in northern Minnesota forests as a control on Eastern spruce budworm, a serious defoliator of Northern fir and spruce forests.
- YOUTH CONSERVATION CORPS Last month the Federal Government's Youth Conservation Corps program was launched with the opening of 63 residential and non-residential camps across the Nation designed to provide environmental training and gainful summer employment for young people while they are improving the quality of lands and waters through conservation work. The three-year pilot project will involve 2,200 boys and girls (15 through 18) this first year. Campsites and work areas are on federal lands in 36 States, the District of Columbia, and American Samoa. The young people who participate are from a broad range of social, economic and ethnic backgrounds. Forest Service is managing 33 of the camps with the remaining 30 managed by six agencies of Interior Department.
- WOODSY OWL Forest Service now has a new symbol for anti-pollution, its name -- "Woodsy Owl." Woodsy Owl, with his slogan "Give A Hoot . . . Don't Pollute" will help the cause of anti-pollution much as Smokey Bear serves as a national symbol for forest fire prevention.